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Ante-bellum census enumerations in Florida

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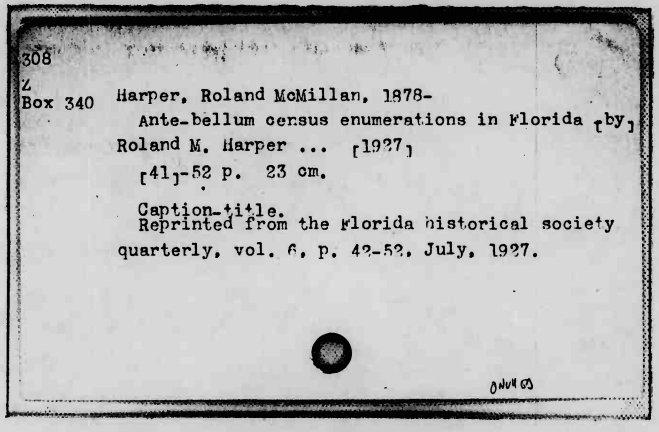
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ANTE-BELLUM CENSUS ENUMERATIONS IN FLORIDA

ROLAND M. HARPER

Reprinted from the Florida Historical Society Quarterly (edited by Julien C. Yonge, Pensacola), Vol. 6, pp. 42-52. July, 1927.

After several months of preoccupation with other matters the writer had an opportunity to analyze the 1850 census returns more fully than before, about a month before this article was published, and two or three pages would have been rewritten if it had been possible, but it was then too late to make the desired changes. It would not be fair to make such extensive changes in the reprints, but the following table will give a better idea of the conditions in different sections of the state than that printed on page 48.

FLORIDA, 1850	West	Middle	Northeast	Central	South	Whole State
Inhabitants per square mile	2.7	5.4	2.3	0.3	0.2	1.6
Percent white	59.6	42.6	61.5	64.9	79.7	54.0
Free population:—						
Percent born in other states	60.1	57.3	23.4	54.5	22.8	52.8
Percent foreign-born	4.7	2.6	1.5	6.6	49.1	5.8
Persons per family	5.13	5.26	5.52	5.58	5.08	5.29

The article on the following pages is reprinted verbatim, except for some slight corrections which were overlooked in proof-reading.

(200 copies, August, 1927)

ANTE-BELLUM CENSUS ENUMERATIONS IN FLORIDA

Although Spain agreed to cede Florida to the United States in 1819, the transfer did not take place until 1821; so the territory was not represented in the United States census of 1820. The first statistical account of its population, therefore, is that of 1830.

U. S. Census of 1830.—Florida in 1830 had fifteen counties, only two or three of which were in the peninsula portion of the State, which was then almost uninhabited. For some reason the enumerators in West Florida did not follow county boundaries, but returned the inhabitants as living between certain streams. These enumeration units were referred in later censuses as nearly as possible to the corresponding counties, but the 1830 figures cannot be taken literally for any West Florida county. For example, the population between the Escambia and Yellow rivers in 1830 was referred in later censuses to Santa Rosa County, although that county was not established until 1842.

The total population of the territory as reported in 1830 was 34,730, of which 18,385 were white, 844 free colored, and 15,501 slaves. West Florida then had 1.3 inhabitants per square mile, Middle Florida (the most fertile section) 2.2, Northeast Florida 1.1,

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Note—These early census returns cannot be analyzed as fully as they deserve without exceeding the space available here, hence this article is chiefly confined to a study of population: and statistics of agriculture, manufacturing, etc., receive only the briefest mention. The author hopes to make a more complete study, brought down to date or nearly so. If any reader can supply additional information or suggest a source of it, he will value it highly.

Dec. 31, 1931 NET

the peninsula 0.04, and the whole territory about 0.6. Leon County (which was then about twice as large as at present) was the most populous, having 6494 inhabitants. Gadsden, Madison, Nassau and Mosquito counties had more negroes than whites, while in the rest of the territory the whites constituted about 60% of the total. Over half the free negroes were in the counties of Escambia and St. Johns, and presumably in the cities of Pensacola and St. Augustine. Of the white population, 34.4% were under 10 years old (indicating an annual birth-rate of about 40 per thousand), and only about 43.5% were over 21 years.

First Territorial Census.—A few years later the citizens of Florida were impatient to have their growing territory made a state, and a certain minimum population was required for statehood. Accordingly steps were taken for a census, a plan already in operation in some other southern states. A law passed by the Legislative Council, and approved by the Governor on Feb. 12, 1837, required the sheriff of every county to ascertain by June 1 "the number of inhabitants, male and female, white, black and coloured" in the county, and transmit a certified copy in triplicate to the treasurer of the territory, to be reported by the latter to the Council. The compensation (to be fixed by the Council) was not to exceed three-quarters of a cent per capita, and a fine of one thousand dollars was prescribed for non-performance. The sheriffs were allowed to employ their deputies for the work.

Evidently the compensation was too low to assure the carrying out of the plan, for Governor Call, in his message of Jan. 2, 1838, stated that with few exceptions the sheriffs had not done their duty in the matter and were therefore subject to the penalty prescribed. He then stressed the necessity of a cen-

sus to show if there were enough inhabitants for statehood. Accordingly another attempt was made, and a law passed on Jan. 22, 1838, and approved Jan. 26, provided for the appointment by the governor of as many enumerators as expedient, to count the "white persons, slaves, and free persons of colour", on or before April 1. Duly certified returns were to be made to the governor and secretary of the territory on or before May 1, and certified copies were to be filed in the county clerks' offices. The compensation was fixed at five cents per head.

No record of the cost, or official publication of the results, of this census has been found, but most of the results were published in the *Pensacola Gazette* of July 21, and in the *Apalachicola Gazette*, July 26, 1838, and perhaps in other papers about the same time. No returns had been received from Columbia, Duval, Hamilton, Mosquito and Nassau counties. The total population of the others was 41,224, and the territorial total was estimated (by means of the number of voters in the delinquent counties) as 48,831, of which 25,173 were assumed to be white and 23,658 black. These figures are quite consistent with those of the federal census two years later. They were still insufficient for statehood.

The constitution of 1839, framed at St. Joseph, provided in Article IX that a census should be taken in 1845 and every tenth year thereafter, primarily for apportionment purposes. (The apportionment, according to a rule of Congress, was to be based on the total white population and three-fifths of the number of slaves.)

U. S. Census of 1840.—In the meanwhile the federal census of 1840 was taken. That divided the population of each of the twenty counties and of two towns (St. Augustine and Tallahassee) according to

race, servitude, sex and age groups; and also gave statistics of occupations, pensioners, defectives, schools, illiteracy, agriculture, horticulture, commerce, fisheries, forests, and manufacturing. The agricultural statistics gave merely the production of various crops, but nothing about the number or size of farms.

The population of the territory at that time totaled 54,477 (just about one per square mile), of which 27,943 were white, 817 free colored, and 25,717 slaves. No enumeration was made in Monroe County outside of Key West, but no doubt most of the population of the county was living in the city, as at the present time. Leon County was still the most populous, with 10,715 inhabitants, but over two-thirds of them were slaves. None of the four peninsula counties had over 700 people (or 100 slaves). West Florida had 1.6 persons per square mile, Middle Florida 3.8, northeast Florida 1.9, and the peninsula 0.05. Negroes outnumbered whites in the counties of Gadsden, Jackson, Jefferson and Leon, as they do today. Over half the free negroes were in Escambia and St. Johns counties, as in 1830, and next in order were Duval and Monroe. The percentage of whites was 55.5 in West Florida, 41.8 in Middle Florida, 62.9 in Northeast Florida, and 86.7 in the peninsula. The correlation of negroes with soil fertility, not only in Florida but in other southern states, was about as marked then as it is today.

Among the whites the percentage of persons under ten years old was 30.1 (a decrease of about one-ninth in ten years), and the percentage of adults was about 47.9. The corresponding figures for negroes were 31.1 and 42.9.

The population of three principal cities, by race, etc., was as follows:

	Total	White	Free Col.	Slaves
St. Augustine	2459	1476	120	863
Tallahassee	1616	815	16	785
Key West	688	516	76	96

Females were slightly in the majority in both races in St. Augustine, but not in the other two places.

By occupation 12,117 persons were reported engaged in agriculture, 1177 in manufacturing and trades, 435 in navigating the ocean, 401 in commerce, 204 in learned professions, and 118 in navigating lakes and rivers.

State Census of 1845.—In compliance with the constitution of 1839, the first state legislature, in July, 1845, enacted a law for the taking of a census by the assessors of revenue in each county, said census to enumerate the whites, free colored, and slaves, as before, and also the taxable property. The compensation provided was eight cents per head in counties with less than five hundred inhabitants, and in others five cents each for the first thousand, three cents for the second and third thousand, and two cents for all over three thousand. The returns were to be made to the Secretary of State, and paid for by the Treasurer; and it was provided that if the assessors in any county failed to perform their duty the task should devolve upon the sheriff.

No date seems to have been fixed for this census, but the work must have begun promptly, for the returns from seventeen of the twenty-six counties were transmitted by the Secretary of State to the Governor on Nov. 17, and published as Document No. 1 accompanying the Governor's message to the adjourned session of the Legislature of 1845. Apparently no returns were ever received from the other

nine counties. The cost of the census was $2237.59, or about four cents per person enumerated.

The census table as published contains several inconsistencies, perhaps due to typographical errors; but the population returned for the seventeen counties was about 56,000, and assuming that the population of the nine missing ones was intermediate between the 1840 and 1850 figures, the State total must have been about 70,000, or 27% more than in 1840.

By race, etc., the population of the seventeen counties was 50.7% white, 0.8% free colored, and 48.5% slaves. Returns from the missing counties (Calhoun, Dade, Escambia, Franklin, Levy, Monroe, Nassau, St. Lucie and Santa Rosa), would doubtless have increased the proportion of whites. Males were considerably in the majority among the whites, but not among the free colored and slaves. The per cent of adults among the whites was 44.1, a little more than in 1830, but less than in 1840. (It may have been higher in the missing counties, though.)

Some sort of a school census must have been taken at the same time, or a little later, for on pages 29-36 of an appendix to the legislative journals of 1848 there is a census of children (age and color not specified) in each township (except in a few counties that made no returns), who could read but not write, read and write, and neither read nor write, with totals.

U. S. Census of 1850.—The United States census of 1850 was better managed than any preceding one. The director at the time of enumeration was Joseph C. G. Kennedy, of Pennsylvania, but he was succeeded in 1853 by J. D. B. DeBow, of New Orleans (who published DeBow's Review, a magazine devoted to the resources of the South, from 1846 to 1871). This census covered population, agriculture, manufacturing, schools, churches, libraries, and various other subjects,

and Kennedy published the results of it in a quarto volume in 1853, several times as bulky as the 1840 census report. DeBow, who was evidently an accomplished statistician, condensed the salient features of the census into an octavo "compendium", adding a few previously unpublished tabulations, and many analyses and comparisons. This was published in 1854, and fortunately enough copies were printed so that the volume is still fairly common.

Florida at that time had twenty-eight counties and 87,445 inhabitants (an increase of 74.8% in ten years), of which 47,203 were white, 932 free colored, and 39,310 slaves. Males were considerably in excess among the whites, slightly in excess among the slaves, and in the minority among the free negroes.

The density of population and percentage of whites in five principal divisions of the state was as follows:—

	Inhabitants per square mile	Per cent White
West	2.7	59.6
Middle	5.4	42.6
Northeast	2.3	61.5
Central	0.3	64.9
South	0.2	79.7

Separate figures (incomplete as to slaves in a few cases) were given for eleven cities and towns, of which the largest were Key West (about 2400), Pensacola, St. Augustine, Jacksonville, and Tampa, in the order named. No other listed had as many as five hundred inhabitants, but Tallahassee, which was not returned separately, probably ranked between St. Augustine and Jacksonville. Estimating the numbers of the omitted slaves, it seems that the proportion of whites and of free negroes was larger, and of slaves consequently smaller, in the cities than in the state as a whole. In the cities females outnumbered males among the slaves and still more among the free negroes, but not among the whites.

Families, of the white and free colored population, were counted for the first time, and totaled 9,107, making 5.3 persons per family. Among the whites 32.3% were under ten and 43% over twenty-one years of age, which was not very different from the 1830 figures, but indicated a higher birth-rate than in 1840, apparently. The corresponding figures for negroes were 31.7 and 43.5.

The leading occupations (of free males over fifteen years of age) were as follows: Farmers 5750, laborers 2537, mariners 550, carpenters 543, soldiers 423, merchants 345, clerks 247, planters 217, federal and state officers 185, physicians 135, lawyers 131, overseers 130, students 125, black and white smiths 120, and teachers 112.

The statistics of immigration from other states and countries, births, marriages, deaths, churches, libraries, farms, etc., would make an interesting story in themselves, but must be passed over for the present; merely mentioning that about half the people living in Florida in 1850 were born elsewhere, and only about one per cent of the State's area was in cultivation.

State Census of 1855.—The preparations for the state census of 1855 were more elaborate than those of 1845. The law (approved Jan. 13, 1855) provided for the appointment of one enumerator in each county by the governor, and his compensation was to be the same as provided in 1845, except that ten cents per capita (instead of eight) was allowed for counties of less than five hundred inhabitants. No time was set for beginning the work, but the returns were required to be submitted to the Secretary of State by September 1.

The results of this census are found on pages 23-28 of the appendix to the legislative journals of 1855. Florida at that time had thirty-one counties, but Manatee was not separated from Hillsborough in the returns, and no report was received from Duval. The aggregate population of the thirty counties reporting is given in one place as 110,850, but that does not correspond exactly with the sums of other figures, indicating clerical or typographical errors somewhere. Duval County, judging from the 1850 and 1860 figures, must have had about 4800 people, making the State total about 115,000, or 32% more than in 1850.

The population was divided according to race, sex, age, etc., as follows:—

	Whites		Free Colored	Slaves
	Under 21	Over 21		
Male	17,672	14,426	366	24,597
	Under 18	Over 18		
Female	15,825	12,570	438	24,929
Total	60,439		804	49,526

There were said to be 20,601 children (white?) between the ages of five and eighteen, of whom 4943 were attending school.

There were 2,265,503 acres of (farm?) land, valued at $13,910,981, or $6.14 per acre. Slaves were valued at $27,250,551, or $550 apiece. These data were also summed up by sections of the State (West, Middle, East and South).

U. S. Census of 1860.—The United States census of 1860 was directed again by J. C. G. Kennedy, and followed approximately the plan of 1850. Florida then had thirty-seven counties, but no report was received from Hernando, and its population was estimated at 1200 in the census volume. (But 2000 would probably have been nearer right, for it had 1637 in 1855 and 2938 in 1870).

The State total was given as 140,424 (an increase of 61% in ten years), of which 77,747 were white, 932 free colored, and 61,745 slaves. Mulattoes and blacks were counted separately, and mulattoes constituted 72.3% of the free colored and 8.5% of the slaves. Or, to put it in another way, 11.4% of the mulattoes and less than one-half of one per cent of the blacks were free. Males were in the majority among the whites and blacks, and females among the mulattoes.

Counties with whites in the minority were Alachua, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Madison and Marion. Leon was still the most populous county in the State, with 12,343 inhabitants, and Jackson came next, with 10,209. Of the free population, 75,370 were natives of the United States, and 3,309 foreign-born. There were 15,090 free families, or 5.2 persons per family, a slight reduction from the 1850 figure.

A table of slave-holders in the volume devoted to agriculture shows that a little more than one (free) family in three owned slaves, with an average number of twelve slaves apiece. The highest ratio of slaveholders to families was in Leon County (66.2%), and that county also had the largest number of slaves per owner (17.7). Other counties with more than half the families owning slaves were Columbia, Jefferson, Marion and Nassau.

Separate figures were given for sixteen cities and towns, the largest being Pensacola (2876), Key West (2832), Jacksonville (2118), Tallahassee (1932), St. Augustine (1914), Apalachicola (1904), Milton (1815), Fernandina (1390), and Monticello (1083). These together contained 17,864 inhabitants, of which 63.6% were white, 3.2% free colored, and 33.2% slaves. Put-

ting it in another way, these nine cities included 12.7% of the total population of the state, 14.6% of the white population, 61.1% of the free colored population, and 9.6% of the slave population. These last figures tend to confirm what was already known from other sources, that in Florida and other southern states the slaves were mostly farm laborers and domestic servants, and the free negroes mostly skilled laborers, who found their best opportunities in towns and cities.

At the present time many of our cities have more women than men; but in 1860 there were no girl stenographers and clerks and few lady teachers, and most of Florida was a sort of frontier country anyway. Consequently males were in the majority in the white population of every town listed in the census, except St. Augustine. There were also more men than women among the slaves in most of the towns, though not among the free negroes.

Although generally speaking the civilization of 1860 was primitive compared with that of today, there was considerable wealth and culture in the older-settled parts of the state. The average farm in Florida in 1860 was worth $3485, of which $2502 represented land and buildings, $137 implements and machinery, and $846 live-stock. And the averages were much higher than this in some of the more fertile counties which had large cotton plantations. But the Civil War soon upset the plantation system, and the 1860 level of farm values was not reached again for a generation or two. The farm acreage nearly doubled between 1850 and 1860, but little if anything was said in those days about the alleged need of a million farmers to "till the idle acres", although less than 2 per cent of the area of the state was cultivated, and the population was only one-tenth as dense as it is now.

Tallahassee, Florida. ROLAND M. HARPER.

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